

# Federal Design Matters

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Jay Solomon, GSA Administrator

## GSA Administrator's goal: Active Federal buildings, better work environments

Jay Solomon, the new Administrator of GSA, has given strong backing to the Old Post Office project and to mixed-use and adaptive-use in the Federal building program. In the course of a recent interview about the Old Post Office renovation, Solomon also indicated a desire to improve the working environments of Federal employees and held out the possibility of an expansion of GSA's art-in-architecture program.

Solomon said that in his first talk with Bert Lance, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Lance stressed the Carter Administration's interest in the success of the Old Post Office project. Lance told Solomon that the President is very interested in the project and feels that the Federal government should take more interest in historic buildings as a means of preserving community integrity.

Under Lance's direction, OMB has issued a directive to GSA ordering it to look at historic buildings before leasing or constructing new buildings. Solomon noted that this policy is not only good for the communities involved, but that re-using old buildings is a form of energy-saving and resource conservation.

Commenting on the Old Post Office architect-engineer selection, Solomon said he thought that all three final designs contained something special, but that Arthur Cotton Moore's was "a little more special." Solomon attended the all-day presentation of the three competing Old Post Office designs. At mid-day, he dashed across Washington to inspect the building first-hand.

(Continued on page 4.)

An exchange of  
information and  
ideas related to  
federal design

National  
Endowment  
for the Arts



## Lance writes to agency heads about graphics improvement:

Executive Office of the President  
Office of Management and Budget  
June 17, 1977

To the Heads of Executive Departments  
and Establishments

Subject: Federal Graphics Improvement

As one part of your overall effort to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in the operations of your agencies, you should include a review of the design and composition of forms, reports, brochures, and other publications. It is often possible to realize significant cost savings and at the same time improve the effectiveness of the publications in achieving their purposes, simply by applying better design principles.

Attention to good graphics design is especially relevant when new agencies or units are created by reorganization efforts. A great deal of uncoordinated development tends to take place, resulting in the adoption of conflicting and inefficient graphics requirements.

The National Endowment for the Arts, through its Federal Graphics Improvement Program, can provide an evaluation of a department's or agency's publications portfolio, and can often supply some continuing consul-



Bert Lance, OMB Director

tation as well; these services usually entail no direct cost to the agency. A number of departments and agencies have already achieved substantial savings with the help of this program.

Waste and inefficiency in Federal operations is the result of many factors, many of which may seem relatively insignificant by themselves. Your constant attention to improvement in all details of your department's or agency's operations is needed to achieve the President's goals of efficient government and a balanced budget.

Bert Lance  
Director

## Landmark competition for landmark building: The Old Post Office

Renovation of Washington's Old Post Office Building moved one step closer recently as the General Services Administration (GSA) selected an architect/engineer after a three-stage competition.

The selection process, which began several months ago, embodied a new approach by GSA, in which the initial field of 85 competitors was first narrowed to nine semifinalists. The agency subsequently commissioned three of these firms to spend six weeks preparing conceptual designs. Although GSA has employed a staged selection process

(Continued on page 2.)



The Old Post Office on Inauguration Day, 1977.



Arthur Cotton Moore, AIA, says open arcades in the observation tower would enable people to see the sights of Washington.

previously, this was the first time the agency had paid competing firms to produce fully developed design proposals.

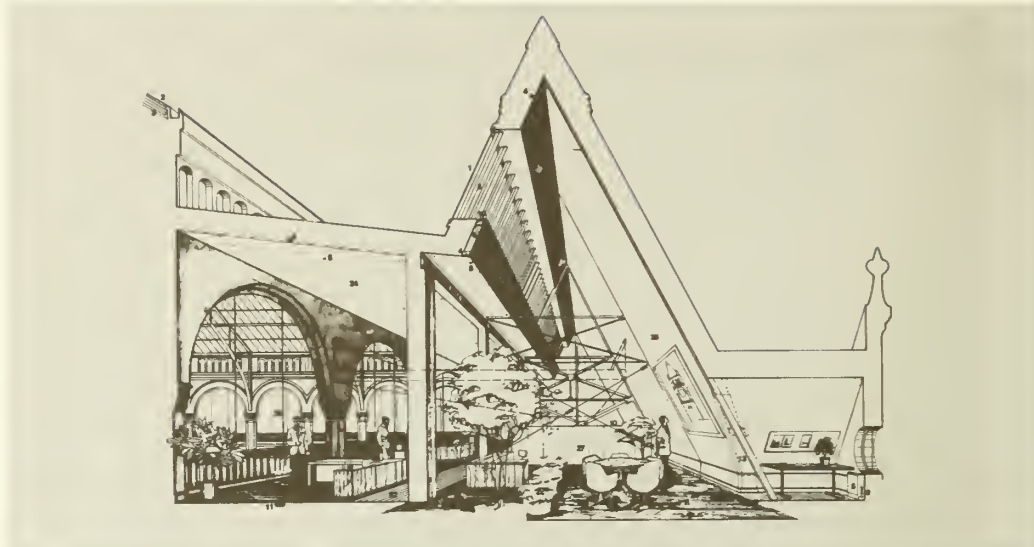
The design competition culminated in detailed presentations by the three a/e teams to a GSA in-house panel and the selection of the joint venture of McGaughy, Marshall & McMillan; Arthur Cotton Moore/Associates; Associated Space Design, Inc.; and Steward Daniel Hoban & Associates of Washington, D.C. The other two teams participating in the final stage of the competition were (1) Hugh Newell Jacobsen of Washington, D.C., with Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson & Abbott, and Desmond and Lord, Inc. of Boston; and (2) Faulkner, Fryer & Vanderpool of Washington, D.C.

The design concept proposed by the winning team enhances the multiple-use potential of the building by providing 50,000 square feet of prime commercial space along with 190,000 square feet of renovated office space for culturally related Federal tenants.

In an interview with *Federal Design Matters*, Arthur Cotton Moore discussed his approach to the proposed renovations:



Moore's first-floor plan includes space for utilities and equipment, as well as restaurants, shops, an expresso bar, and a Government Printing Office bookstore



Dormer study carrels are proposed for the ninth floor. Note solar louvers at upper left.

**Federal Design Matters:** What are the sources of your interest in the Old Post Office?

**Moore:** There are some powerful natural qualities, fundamental things, about the building that make me fascinated with this project. I was active in the original congressional effort to save it. Indeed my first involvement with it was January 1971. It seems like a long time.

**FDM:** How do you view the value of the building to the city in general?

**Moore:** It could be a bridge between the two faces of Washington, D.C.—local city and national capitol. A bridge between Mr. and Mrs. America and Mr. and Mrs. Washington, D.C. A bridge between the Mall and F & G Streets shopping areas. It is building on the idea of the strategic use of an old building through careful planning of its mixed-use capability.

**FDM:** How did you determine the different treatments of different areas of the building?

**Moore:** The fifth floor, which was elaborately detailed, we treated as a strict restoration zone.

On that floor were the former elaborately detailed executive offices for the Postmaster General. We proposed actually two particular zones: one which embodied an adaptive reuse response to an inserted element such as the new shopping levels; the other, a restoration zone like those prime highly visible elevator lobbies, the major entrances, the fifth floor and other places where attention was originally lavished on the details and decoration. On the fifth floor changes were made mostly in regard to mechanical equipment but so carefully that those changes will be virtually invisible.

**FDM:** We would like to know why you decided to give the Old Post Office 50,000 square feet of mixed-use space rather than just the 25,500 square feet proposed by the General Services Administration?

**Moore:** I wanted to simply demonstrate that the available mixed-use space in the building could be made larger than what was required by the program. It was opportunity that needed to be shown.



Architect Moore explains his proposal for the cortile.





Proposed cortile interior



**FDM:** Did you have any thoughts about use of income from rental of commercial space when you created the extra 24,500 square feet of mixed-use space?

**Moore:** There could be a significant added income stream from this new outlease space. In part that income stream could conceivably be used to support lectures, performances, poetry readings on the cortile stage. These performances could symbolically join the functions of the office tenants upstairs—National Endowment et al.—and the commercial life downstairs. The outlease leasing program itself follows a series of themes relating to the building and to the individual tenants. The National Endowment for the Arts, for example, is responded to by shops catering to the visual arts, the performing arts, etc. Another example is shops that sell architectural artifacts and drawings responding to the tenants engaged in architectural preservation.

**FDM:** Was your treatment of the observation tower, although not currently in the GSA scope of work, also meant to connect the upper and lower parts of the building?

**Moore:** No, the observation tower is thought of as a traffic generator primarily supporting the commercial levels. Access to the office levels is controlled through the existing open cage elevators. The lower commercial floors would attract two markets: people from the metropolitan area who would go to the stores for their unique offerings and the tourists in tourist season who would be enticed by the uniqueness of the building, particularly the observation tower. The tourists would flow in from the mall and buy tickets to get into the observation tower and be exposed to the shops. The tower would be a nifty thing. Instead of having those little slits like you have at the Washington Monument, you could enjoy the open Romanesque arcade at the tower's top that would admit many people to panoramic views of Washington. Going up to the tower would be a real trip. You would see the clockroom and clockworks as well.

**FDM:** One other area that you treated differently was the ninth-floor dormer space.

**Moore:** The ninth floor, which was service and dormitory space for past employees in the original plan, has been suggested as mechanical space. In our scheme it is prime office space created by providing skylights on the inboard side of the main gables. The smaller roof dormers are suggested as study carrels. The ninth floor is a good example of adaptive reuse in preservation as contrasted with the restoration approach given to the fifth floor.

**FDM:** You also used solar collectors in your conceptual design.

**Moore:** We realized that the stunning original skylight roof which cooked decades of tenants during sultry Washington summers and which was finally covered with aluminum was at once an architectural masterstroke and an environmental disaster. We have to control

it. We proposed roof solar collectors as struts—kind of like vertical venetian blinds that will track the sun and thereby provide shade from the direct sunlight but allow light from sides in shade. The north end wall of the roof, facing the clock tower, will be clear glass without any struts for unobstructed views of the tower.

**FDM:** You have changed the basement too; that was dead storage space in the feasibility study?

**Moore:** The basement for us is now the main ground floor because of our two new public entrances. That and part of the first floor were originally devoted to service space, with trucks backing into loading platforms and mail sorting under the interior glass roof. We removed the glass roof but left the girders as a spatial definer between the basic use of the building, but allowing all uses to share in the grand cortile.

**FDM:** Any comments about the competition? Would you enter another one?

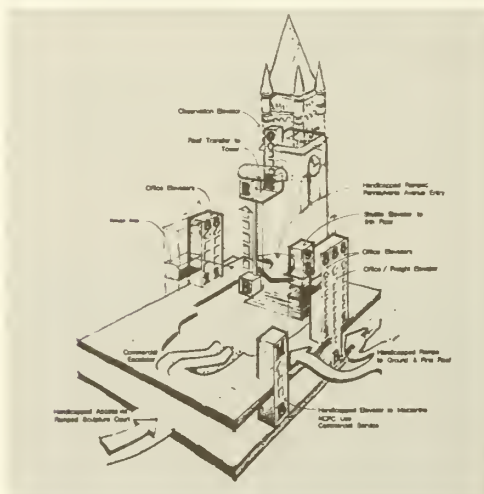
**Moore:** It is my impression that this is the first time ever that a three-level paid competition on design was held by the Federal Government. It was a landmark competition with a landmark building—a fantastic structure in which the question of design is very important. I would certainly enter into such a competition again.

**FDM:** What about working with the Federal Government?

**Moore:** Other members of the joint venture have done Federal Government work before. I haven't, but look forward to it. I was impressed that GSA Administrator Jay Solomon stayed for all three presentations. I understand that it was following the first one that he decided to have a personal look at the Old Post Office and climbed all the way up into the tower. I had the feeling that he was really involved in the design and the competition.

**FDM:** Reaction to being selected?

**Moore:** Great!



Moore's plan for vertical circulation and access for handicapped individuals.

## Solomon—continued

Solomon's concern for design is evident in his office which he has turned into a gallery of models and drawings from the GSA art-in-architecture program.

Solomon said he likes the commercial out-leasing program and will draw on his own experience to make it work. Before coming to GSA, Solomon was chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Arlen Shopping Centers Co. Solomon says he agrees that federal buildings should be "living buildings" and focal points of public activity but that "the only way you're going to be able to do this is for us, as managers of these buildings, to create activity ourselves. That becomes something that GSA will have the responsibility to try to create: the band concerts, or the art shows or whatever."

Solomon feels GSA should be a testing ground for a lot of new ideas, including new ways of designing the work environment and he says he has the President's support: "If you don't think that that President over there sitting in that White House is concerned with the working conditions of the people of this government, you don't understand him." Solomon said that, to him, the work environment "carries not only from the outside of the building with the landscaping, but to what the lobby is going to look like, what the hallways are going to look like, the bathrooms—the whole environment of the working area. I think you can, without spending any more monies, make an environment decent and worthwhile to work in. I don't think you should ask anyone to work in an environment that isn't good."

Solomon also wants to try extending GSA's art-in-architecture program to the crafts and photography, and is giving serious thought to increasing the budget which was cut by his predecessor.

Because of the recent publicity about the Old Post Office project, Solomon said, he finds that Senators and Congressmen have renewed interest in historic buildings in their own states and districts. He believes that, because of the Old Post Office, the adaptive and mixed-use public building idea is going to be picked up all over the country. And he observed that "some of the cities and states are doing things much faster and better than we are, and I don't think that we as a government should be very bashful about what we're doing, because we're really behind the times and we're really following instead of leading."

The first Federal project to take up the Old Post Office precedent outside of Washington may well be in one of those leading cities. Solomon reports that GSA has its eye on a historic hotel in Savannah, Georgia. And Solomon promises that, if all goes well, it will be a mixed-use project.

Final selection on the Old Post Office design competition was made by the GSA evaluation board consisting of William R. Lawson, Chairman, Claude Bernier, Kent Slepicka, Dwain E. Warne and Karel Yasko, assisted by 20 GSA technical consultants



## Federal Design Matters looks at exhibits . . .

### At Agriculture



Agriculture took advantage of ambient lighting in its patio for "The Rural Face of America" exhibit.

Federal exhibits designers interested in ways to cut costs and energy use can get some ideas from recent work at the Agriculture Department.

With a budget of about \$400,000 a year to produce from 250 to 300 exhibits, Agriculture Design Chief David Sutton is concerned about costs. "With materials and shipping costs up, we're going heavily into research into new techniques," Sutton says. Paper exhibits, silkscreening on corrugated board, and printing on fabrics or vinyl-coated canvas are but a few of the ways Agriculture is combating energy and cost problems.

One example, a table-top exhibit for Department field people, was printed in several colors on corrugated cardboard. It has already lasted longer than was predicted and has given the Department a per-use-cost of less than \$1.

An exhibition of photographs, "The Face of Rural America," set up in the patio of the main Agriculture Department building in Washington, was designed to be lit by ambient light, thus saving precious watts of electricity.

In another exhibit, at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, Agriculture used a computer terminal to display information that

otherwise would have taken a large wall. This approach not only saved materials, but the costs of fabrication and transportation as well. The terminal runs on little power and won't be junked once the exhibit has reached the end of its useful life.

Agriculture's centralized design operation serves 30 agencies within the Department. It functions much like a corporate design office in that one person is assigned about six or seven agencies. With art and planning conferences beforehand, a preliminary presentation is made to the "client" agency for an evaluation of the accuracy of the presentation.

"We work toward the audience. We will devise any technique—a mock quiz show, comic book approach, soft sculpture—to make an exhibit work," Sutton said. "We have no standard way or technique to solve a problem, but we do have quality standards that have to be met," he added.

With a small fabrication shop in-house, the Department ships, warehouses, refurbishes, and fabricates many exhibits. Sutton estimates that the Department contracts out about 60 percent of the dollar volume of exhibits work.



In Chicago, Agriculture used a computer terminal . . .



and a comic-strip approach.

### At National Park Service



Exhibits Chief Russ Hendrickson, left, took *Federal Design Matters* on a tour of the National Park Service's Interpretive Design Center in Harpers Ferry, W. Va., where *FDM* saw John A. Segaren, architectural wood carver, finishing a coat of arms for DeSoto National Park. . . .



Designers Robert Johnsson and David McLean discussing a model of the U.S.S. Cairo, a Civil War gunboat being reconstructed for the Vicksburg Park. . . .



And workers preparing for the next round of silkscreening as the first batch of posters dries. The Center is housed in a building designed by Ulrich Franzen, AIA.

## Design briefs

**Ready-to-wear spacesuits . . .** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has hired Vaughn Adams, professor of industrial design at Arizona State University, whose design proposal using computer measurements for spacesuits is under consideration. The proposal would cut considerably the cost of spacesuits—now running \$1 million a year. The ready-to-wear versions, which will come in three or four sizes with gloves in nine or ten sizes, are planned for use by 1980, the proposed start of the space shuttle. Adams developed the computer measurements last summer through work at the Johnson Space Center in Houston.



Astronauts try out space suits designed to give them greater mobility with less effort.





Recap session after judging "Design in Michigan" entries.

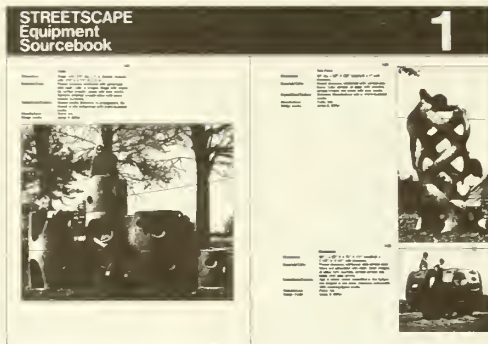
**Design Michigan** . . . At mini-conferences in Lansing on June 7, Michigan legislators heard case studies on interior design (Michigan Department of Social Services and Senator Mark Hatfield's offices) and visual communications (U.S. Department of Labor graphics, redesign of U.S. Senate papers, and signage). The conferences were part of the statewide "design awareness educational program" called "Design Michigan." Another activity, an exhibition surveying 10 years of professional design in Michigan, will open at Cranbrook Academy of Art on October 15. The exhibition will also be featured in the Michigan Design Assembly scheduled for late fall of '77.

**Hanks honored** . . . The American Society of Interior Designers has chosen Arts Endowment Chairman Nancy Hanks as the recipient of the Society's prestigious Thomas Jefferson Award. As part of the National ASID Conference in Houston, Tex., the award was presented for "her personal contribution to the preservation of our cultural heritage." Though not an artist herself, Miss Hanks' dedication to the arts and her support of the major role design plays in the lives of all people, "have made her one of the most influential and respected women in Washington."

**Save the art** . . . General Services Administration has three new projects underway to restore artworks in Federal buildings. One project is the restoration of murals painted by Louis Bouché and Ross Moffett in the Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kans. Two others are in Washington, D.C.: The mural painted by Kindred McLeary in the U.S. State Department's 21st Street lobby and 31 portraits of Federal judges in the U.S. District Courthouse. For more information about the fine arts conservation program, write Public Buildings Service (PCB), General Services Administration, Washington, D.C. 20405.

**Environmental design study** . . . A report that presents potential research options in environmental design has been prepared by the Division of Advanced Environmental Research and Technology of the National Science Foundation. The 225-page report is available in very limited quantity from Jean P. Gilmore, at (202) 632-4345.

**Cultural heritage** . . . The Tennessee Valley Authority's 1977 Cultural Heritage Series will conclude with an "Employee Photography Exhibit" December 5 to January 1.



Play equipment is included in the "Sourcebook."

**Streetscape Sourcebook** . . . For lighting, traffic control, street furniture, signage, and safety and security equipment the Center for Design Planning prepared and the American Public Works Association published the "Streetscape Equipment Sourcebook." It may be ordered from APWA, 1313 East 60th Street, Chicago, Ill. 60637 for \$15.

**Interagency council on printing** . . . Agency designers, through the efforts of the Federal Design Council, have a new channel for expressing their views to the Public Printer: Agriculture's David Sutton now represents them on the Interagency Council on Printing and Publication Services, a group formed by the Government Printing Office a year ago to exchange views on the printing and distribution of government documents. Members include representatives from 10 large agencies, two smaller ones, and the GPO. The Council has discussed pricing of publications, mailing lists, contracting for composition, and problems with printing contractors, among other matters. Sutton hopes to get the following on the agenda for future meetings: Coated stock and reverse printing, access to technology, information on photocomposition, and GPO's quality attributes program. Write to Sutton if you have ideas (but please limit them to areas of concern throughout government, not specific internal matters in your agency). His address: Chief, Design Division, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

National Endowment  
for the Arts  
Washington, D.C.  
20506

Official Business



Design director Bob Mulcahy supervises installation of animal tracks for the National Zoo's new trail system. The system opened officially on June 30.

**Casebooks award** . . . "Print Casebooks 2" certificates of design excellence went to the National Zoological Park, Smithsonian Institution, and the National Endowment for the Arts in recognition of the Zoo's graphics program. The graphics master plan was executed by New York designers Wyman and Cannan working closely with the Zoo's in-house graphics staff. Writes Casebook: "The most impressive fact about this graphics program is not that it is diverse in scope, but that, despite the diversity, it is extraordinarily unified." Casebook also cited the work of HOK/ Graphics (a branch of Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, Architects) for the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum.

**Barriers guide** . . . "Design Criteria: New Public Buildings Accessibility" offers recommendations for making public buildings usable by handicapped people. The booklet, published by GSA's Public Buildings Service, is available from GSA's Business Service Center, Washington, D.C. 20407, for \$2.60.

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